

THE PROVINCE OF STYLE IN A TRANSFORMATIONAL GRAMMAR

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1. The linguistic problem with style is that of matching up grammatical constraints with the unruly behavior found in the most attractive specimens a language has to offer--its literature. There are two important classes of verbal data which elude the restrictions imposed by a general grammar: a) those sentences which appear grammatically undercontrolled because of attention lapses, lack of experience or training, etc. and b) those sentences which appear grammatically overcontrolled or "stylized" because of esthetic intent, especially calculated effect, etc. At present, such sophisticated and unsophisticated sentences are treated as comparably "deviant." Grouping these two kinds of sentences together seems justified by the fact that when competence rules are supplemented in order to enumerate sophisticated talk, these rules enumerate unsophisticated talk as well. Surely it is a failure in explanatory power for a grammar to be unable to scan approvingly the most attractive sentences in a language without at the same time sanctioning all sorts of clumsy talk. The least that might be expected of style rules in a transformational grammar is that they will allow the grammar to enumerate all of the sophisticated sentences and none of the unsophisticated sentences. This condition must be met by any set of rules that proposes to solve the grammatical problem with style.

The Style Province

2.1. Location. A natural tendency in linguistic discussions of style has been to position style rules either within the generational history of sentences (that is, as supplemental competence rules) or among the various rules that apply to performance. Neither location seems to be satisfactory. Style rules seem to be most profitably located as an independent, optional set which intervenes after the application of competence rules and before the selection of performance rules. Thus, if no style rules are selected, then an "ordinary" sentence will result (that is, the sort of sentence that is entirely predictable from the rules of competence). It is a specific claim of this paper, therefore, that style rules come into play after the last line of generation is complete.

2.2. Kinds of Rules. It is tempting to assume that stylistic procedures are not grammatical and that stylized sentences, therefore, fall outside of grammatical concern. The data given below will argue that style rules are, in fact, taken directly from grammatical relations and effects. It would seem that grammatical procedures that structure the ordinary sentence may function again, as a set of style rules, to convert plain talk into stylized discourse.

2.3. Analytical Procedure. For linguistic purposes, sophisti-

cated or stylized speech seems best defined as a discourse in which ordinary sentences have been subjected to one or more style rules. If this is so, then a transformational grammar may develop its own province of style rules in such a way as to meet the condition on adequacy set forth above. Unsophisticated speech will automatically be ruled out of the grammar because of the absence or unreconstructability of an acceptable last line of generation. Thus, unsophisticated sentences will be described as examples of ill-formed last lines of generation, the generational histories of which include one or more deviations from grammatical rules. Sophisticated sentences may then be accounted for as instances of well-formed last lines of generation which have been subjected to one or more style rules.

Some Style Rules

3. Grammatical Operations. It seems very likely that all of the transformational operations can perform as style rules. Permutation is especially interesting because its function as a style rule resolves the familiar problem in transformational grammar of how to handle certain unpredictable but acceptable rearrangements of syntactic parts. Stylistic permutation is, like all style rules, unpredictable because it need never have been applied and acceptable because it has affected the sort of sentence that the grammar by itself would have generated.

3.1. Permutation. $(a+b \rightarrow b+a)$

- (1) $NP+MV+Adv \rightarrow Adv+MV+NP$

Like a small gray
coffee-pot
sits the squirrel. Humbert Wolfe, "The Gray Squirrel"

- (2) $DO+IO \rightarrow IO+DO$

Among the turtles and the lilies he turned to me
The white ignorant hollow of his face.

Stanley Kunitz, "Father and Son"

- (3) $V+Prt+Adv \rightarrow V+Adv+Prt$

The leaf will wrinkle to decay
And crumble into dust away.

James Stephens, "The Crest Jewel"

2. Deletion. $(a+b \rightarrow b)$

- Del. there is/was (existential)

- (4) Beyond all this the wish to be alone.

Philip Larkin, "Wants"

Del. Relative

- (5) It is the sweet sap makes the maple flame.

Elizabeth B. Harrol, "Calvinist
Autumnal"

Del. to be

- (6) The Weather Bureau's forecast, effective until noon.

Muriel Rukeyser, "Ceiling Unlimited"

3. Replacement. (a → b)

- (7) NP → Predet

The plenty hurt me, 't was so new.

Emily Dickinson, "I had been
hungry all the years"

- (8) Adv → NP

I stepped from Plank to Plank
A slow and cautious way.

Emily Dickinson, "I Stepped from
Plank to Plank"

Conclusion

4. Not only grammatical operations but grammatical relations, of the paradigmatic-building sort, appear to function as style rules. The imposition of grammatical relations on well-formed sentences seems to operate most dramatically to produce complicated semantic forms such as the oxymoron, metaphor, metonymy, etc. No doubt there is much more to be done with the style province of a transformational grammar. It is, perhaps, the very place to locate such pressures for grammatical change as the introduction of new syntactic patterns and new idioms, which surely must begin their grammatical lives as novel effects in speech. The style province can render the rest of the grammar a simpler yet more subtle and powerful descriptive instrument.